

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, April 18, 1879, with transcript

Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel (Hubbard) Bell. Cambridge, Mass., April 18th, 1879. Dear Mabel — Ma belle May Bell!

There! How much is that? Three dollars? Draw a cheque for the amount and charge it to me — for I'd rather be fined than not call you “my beautiful Mabel.” For so you ARE my dear — in spite of all you may say to the contrary!

You may shut your eyes if you like — to the fact, but in spite of all you can do you will — “Be Still” (1) — Ma belle Mabel!!

Oh! Isn't it nice to be out of your reach so that I can pun away to my heart's content! Strain your imagination to its utmost — but you cannot possibly understand my feelings — when I fined myself punning — in the home of my WIVES and SISTERS !!! Oh! dear! Oh! dear — Oh dear — the unappreciativeness of empty space! If only the ghost of a Miss True were here what a laugh I could have just now! But no — I am alone — and all I can do is to try and imagine the consternation of my poor little wife when she finds that I have broken loose from her golden fetters — and that she can no longer impose upon me — a fine! There! That's my last! “Good bye sweet puns, good bye”!

Having thus relieved my overcharged feelings — (“overcharged” was unintentional and doesn't count) I think it is about time for me to commence the first edition of my new thoughts for you — 2 for you know — that this afternoon — I promised you a “volume” upon “?”!

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Before doing so however let me give you what few crumbs of news I may have — for if you once get me started upon my New Theory of “? “ — there is no saying what may be the end of it.

Poor Mr. Blake is seriously ill — worked out or worried out I am afraid. Mr. Bradley says that the Company will probably lose the benefit of his services for at least one year. Could anything be more instructive to us than this. Keep me away from the business headquarters of the Company my darling — if you value at all — my life — my health — my spirits or my temper. Oh! That those law-suits were ended. I am afraid to make more inventions — for fear of being dragged into an interminable business-connection with the Company.

Think of that list of Inventions waiting to be offered to the Company. Can they fail to accept some? And will not some of these be sooner or later in “Interference” with some other “party”? Ugh! Where is it to end? If we do not specify in our Agreement with the Company the nature of the suits that I am to give my time and attention to — I may be involved in interminable law-suits before I know what I am about — and be obliged in honour to defend the patents taken up by the Company — by giving “all the time that Counsel may require” to these new and ever-increasingly complicated affairs. If this goes on I shall be a sort of shuttle-cock — to be tossed about between New York and Boston or Chicago — and San Francisco for aught I know — at the will and pleasure of our solicitors. The 3 good-bye to home-life and my little wife! Good-bye to Scientific Research and study! Good-bye to quietness and peace of mind and to everything that makes life enjoyable — Oh! It is HORRIBLE!! Don't let it be. Stay by me dear! Don't let me slip off from you like this. When that picture is finished come with me wherever I go — and let our solicitors and the Company see that we cannot and will not be separated. It is the sacred right of a husband and wife to be together — and parents should not be separated from their children.

I can see that the object to be attained by the Company is to separate me from you or force us to live in Boston. I am more than ever determined that nothing shall induce me

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to live permanently in the neighbourhood of the Company's headquarters where I can be worried and worked out like poor Blake. I have been unable to see him as yet on account of the weather. There has been rain and storm ever since my arrival in Boston and it has been quite impossible for me to go so far out into the country. Even now the wind howls among the trees and I hear the spattering of the rain-drops upon the window. I ventured out this evening to your Cousin Mary's but found only Carrie Blatchford at home. Miss Blatchford had ventured into town to see Miss May who is quite unwell.

Poor little Gardiner has had an accident. It does not amount to much but the doctor has thought it wiser to keep him safely in bed for a few days. No person knows exactly how it happened but Gardiner says that he fell off his velocipede and that a number of velocipedes and boys ran over him. He came in with his knee cut — and has been sent off to bed bandaged up for the night.

4

The ceiling in the parlor seems finished so far as I can judge from a rough inspection of it in the dark. The men are to do something or other to the hall tomorrow. By the bye I met Mr. Hayes in the cars yesterday and he was very anxious to know whether I thought of taking this house for a cousin of his wanted to rent it for a year or two and his cousin was afraid he might lose the chance. I told him that my plans were unsettled — that we proposed coming here temporarily — and that we had no present intention of residing in Cambridge for any length of time. Mr. Hayes told me that either a proposition had been made to him by — or that he had made a proposition to — the National Bell Telephone Co. — to be engaged by them for the purpose of preparing specifications and that the Executive Committee were to decide about it on Monday.

The Telephone wire connecting this house with the Cambridge office has been erected and the end of the wire has been brought into this room — but no telephones have made their appearance as yet.

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I have been hard at work all day in the Library of the Academy of Arts and Sciences hunting up German references with a Mr. Emerson who has been detailed by the Company to assist me.

Prof. Monroe, Mr. Butterfield and Dr. Blake called at the library to see me today. Prof. Monroe wants a lecture — Dr. Blake bespeaks an article — and Mr. Butterfield wants my assistance in Washington and Baltimore. I have offered to lecture for him or do anything I can to open up a new field for Visible Speech — and I have offered to supply him with a fount of Visible Speech type from the matrices that were made for me at the time the Telephone took me away from my legitimate work.

5

I am afraid that my letter has already grown so long that I better reserve my ideas about “?” for my next.

Love to Mary — to Papa and Mama — to Sister and Berta — to Elsie May and to my dear little wife.

Kind regards to Cousin Sam.

Your affectionate husband, Alec. Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell, 1509 Rhode Island Avenue, Washington, D. C.